SFI REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS – ROUND 2 FUNDING

INDIGENOUS-LED CLIMATE SMART FORESTRY

PURPOSE

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is currently leading a grant from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) which has a funding mechanism to support on the ground implementation for Indigenous partners on nature-based climate solutions. SFI is offering funding to First Nations and Indigenous organizations (territorial governments, tribal councils, and/or development corporations) to advance Indigenous-led proposals and on-the-ground projects related to climate smart forestry. The primary goal of this funding opportunity is to identify, develop, and implement climate smart practices and strategies with Indigenous partners to reduce emissions from forestry and to ensure forests managed by our Indigenous partners are more resilient to a changing climate.

Projects should be relevant for forest managers and decision-makers of large forest parcels (e.g. 20,000+ hectares). Projects with a small footprint may be considered if the methodology clearly demonstrates that the project can feasibly and economically be scaled up to larger forests. Smaller projects may have more limited reporting requirements.

Practices that can create a climate benefit are necessary for the ECCC-funded project. Projects that have forest health, climate adaption and/or mitigation benefits, as well as co-benefits, including socioeconomic and cultural benefits, will likely meet these criteria. Projects aligned with other incentives programs like carbon crediting are allowed.

Forests managed by First Nations and/or Indigenous partners do not need to be SFI certified to be eligible to apply for this funding. However, those considering certifying their forests or already certified through the SFI Standard may receive priority consideration.

FUNDING DETAILS

Up to $150,000 CAD per year is available for project, for up to 2 years ($300,000 CAD maximum). This maximum funding amount is not guaranteed and is dependent on the strength of proposals and ability to meet the criteria outlined herein. Projects may be funded at a lower amount than requested. Funds are intended to primarily cover costs to implement the project activities. These costs include but are not limited to, modifying forest management plans, field activities and operational costs, data collection, and purchase of equipment and supplies. Additional expenses needed to implement project activities and meet overall project objectives, including staff time, training, travel costs, and community engagement will also be considered as long as these costs are reasonable and justified. Projects where additional expenses exceed 40% of the total budget should include an explanation on how these costs are essential to meet project goals and expected outcomes. Administrative costs can be covered, but should not exceed 10% of the total project budget. Projects must be completed within a 2-year period and project funds must be expended by March 31, 2027.

Funds are not intended to be used for capital purchases or capital improvements (i.e., purchases of buildings, land, or heavy equipment), to fund research projects normally funded under Canada's Tri-agency Research Council, or to fund activities not directly related to achieve project outcomes. Rental expenses (e.g. rental of vehicles, forestry and logging equipment, office space, etc.) are considered an eligible expense but must be directly related to and necessary for the successful implementation of the project.

Rental expenses should be nominal and account for no more than 10% of overall project budgets unless justified and substantiated.

Project leads will be required to submit specific interim and final project narrative and budgeting reports to SFI in accordance with funding agreements and will engage collaboratively with SFI on their funded projects.

Potential practices with climate and community benefits	**Specific examples of practices, including from currently funded projects**

• Sustainable forest management, for example:
  • Improving forestry operational efficiency
  • Handling of residuals
  • Retention harvests
  • Structural diversification
	• Exploring alternatives to herbicide use (e.g. manual brushing)
	• Alternatives to slash burning (e.g. terrestrial storage of biomass)
	• Assessing opportunities to reduce windthrow through retention harvest
	• Managing forests to have a variety of tree ages, species, and structure to enhance resilience

• Selection of tree species (e.g., fire resistant, future adapted) and climate-based seed transfer	• Assessing methods on seed and seedling selection to match site conditions under future climate scenarios (this may also be paired with assisted migration)
• Forest restoration, including post-disturbance and increasing forest complexity (e.g., for biodiversity, fire resiliency)	• Assessing the impact of various tree planting densities on ungulate (e.g., Caribou) habitat and outcomes
• Enhancements of special forests (e.g., coastal cedar stands)	• Methods to prioritize retention harvest and enhancement on red cedar forest type
• Increased carbon storage	• Lengthening the time between harvest rotations; using less intensive harvesting methods
• Other practices that are a priority to First Nation such as cultural burning, creation of reserves for culturally significant trees species, or protection and enhancement of non-timber forest products or values.	• Identifying practices within forest stewardship plan for conservation of forests • Managing forests for multiple values including protection and restoration of medicines, foods, and other culturally significant plants in the understory

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Eligibility

Applicants must be either:

- A First Nation or Indigenous community with decision-making responsibilities in the management of forests in Canada, or
- An Indigenous representative organization such as a territorial government, tribal council, or development corporation that either has access to tenure and has responsibility for managing forested lands or is partnering with First Nations or Indigenous communities meeting these criteria (Note: Development Corporations or similar entities must be 50% Indigenous owned to be eligible).
- Applications from First Nations or Indigenous communities that are working in partnership with forest management companies are also welcomed and encouraged.

Alignment with programmatic priorities

- Alignment with the ECCC Climate Smart Forestry grant expected outcomes and benefits, including:
  - enhancement or protection of cultural resources and values,
  - sustained forest health,

- increased biodiversity, or other ecosystem benefits
- Alignment with SFI Climate Smart Forestry priorities, including Objective 9 of the SFI Forest Management Standard, including:
  - identify and address the climate change risks to forests and forest operations and develop appropriate adaptation objectives and strategies, and
  - identify and address opportunities to mitigate the effects associated with its forest operations on climate change.

Learn more about the SFI Forest Management Standard:

Demonstrate measurable climate benefits

- Note: Applicants will not be required to quantify climate/carbon/GHG benefits, but projects that include appropriate methods to quantify carbon or other benefits will receive consideration in the selection process. Potential benefits can be quantified and assessed by the SFI review team in partnership with grant recipients.

Technical merit including quality, excellence, and rigour of the proposed project

- Demonstrated knowledge, experience, and expertise of project team members,
- Feasibility of the proposed project, including cost of project implementation,
- Scalability and applicability of the practices for forest managers, including the ability to replicate or amplify impacts at regional or national scales, and
- Commitment to appropriate measurement and monitoring of project activities and outcomes, and
- Capacity and preparedness to collaborate with SFI, knowledge keepers, and other partners or experts.

Budget and cost-effectiveness

- Major milestones and deliverables, and
- Matching and in-kind contributions of applicants.

Projects that best align with the above criteria will be selected by SFI staff. Further details about final award amounts and expectations for reporting will be shared with successful recipients.

TIMELINE

Applications are being accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis until all funds have been committed. It is SFI's goal to notify applicants within 45 days after proposals are received and acknowledged by an SFI team member. SFI reserves the right to return a proposal with merit to applicants for clarification on project activities and/or budget items. In this case, applicants may choose to revise and resubmit their proposals. However, there is no guarantee that funds will be available after resubmission.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Please send a written proposal of no more than 10 pages (excluding letters of support or other supporting documentation) to the contact(s) provided. Recognizing and honouring Indigenous oral traditions, SFI will also accept video submissions of any length necessary to convey your project's story. Video or written submissions should include:

- A cover page or introduction that includes:
  - project title
  - project summary
  - contact information of the project lead
  - a description of your organization and how it meets eligibility requirements
- A project narrative that includes:
  - project duration (up to 2 years)
  - project location
  - forest classification and age class(es)

  - activity/activities, including alignment with the purpose of this funding opportunity (i.e., implementation climate smart forestry practices with climate-related benefits)
  - methods and methodologies
  - demonstration of expected outcomes for forests and community, including real or potential socioeconomic and cultural benefits
  - scalability and applicability for forest manager
- A detailed budget and budget description including milestones and deliverables, demonstrating alignment with funding priorities and guidance in this RFP
- A brief discussion of matching or other funding sources such as in-kind contributions
- Letters of support from Chief Council, leadership, and/or potential project partners supporting the project.

For more information, please contact:

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For application submission and to register for the informational webinars, please contact:

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